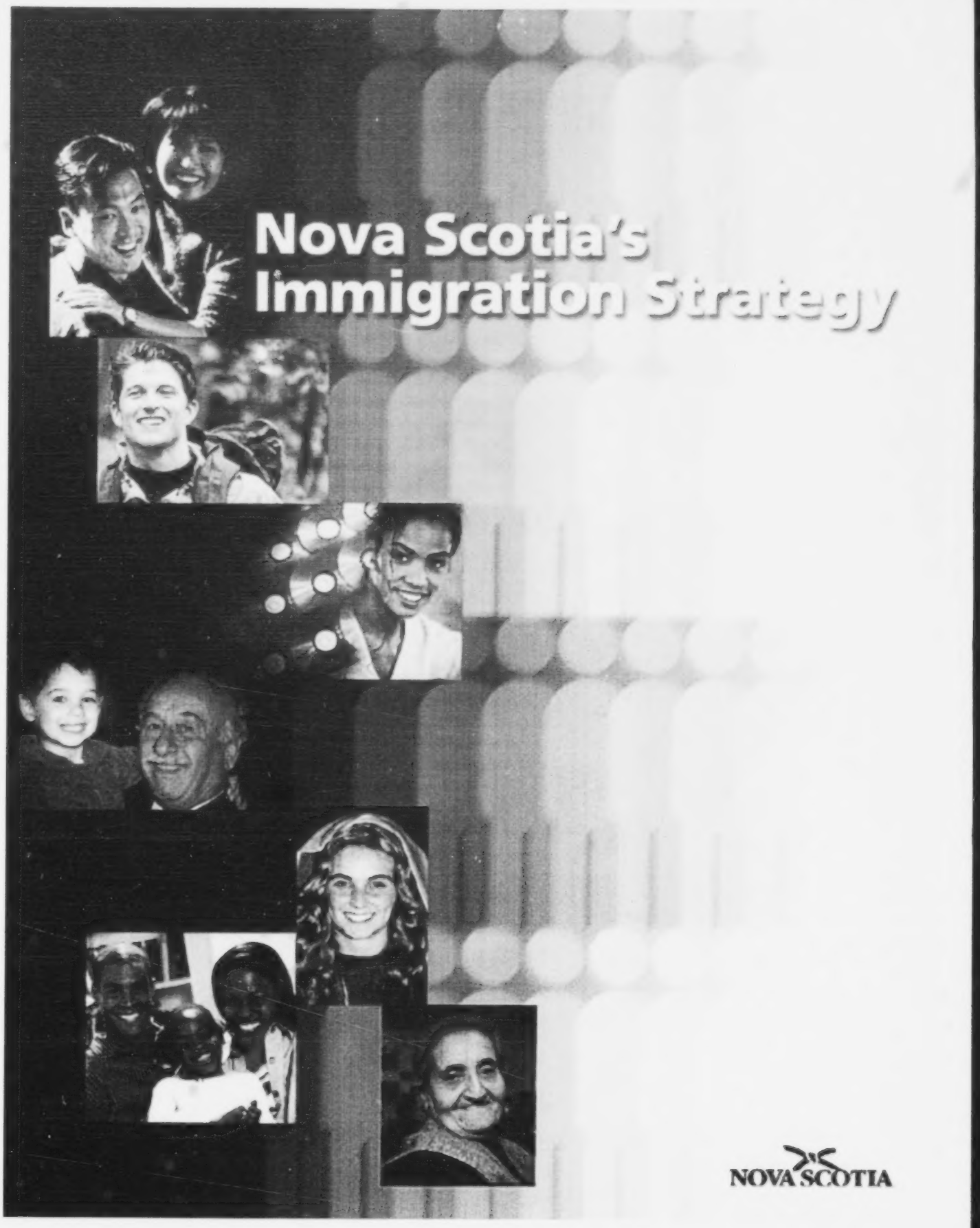
Nova Scotia's
Immigration Strategy
NOVA SCOTIA

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# Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy

January 2005

NOVA SCOTIA

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## Message from the Premier

On August 31, 2004, my government released *A Framework for Immigration*, a discussion paper outlining the demographic, economic, and social reasons why the province would benefit from increased immigration. Results of our consultations throughout the province show broad-based support for the direction provided by this framework. The strategy outlined in this document has been built upon the framework and outlines the goals and objectives that will set the stage for a broad range of activities over the next five years.

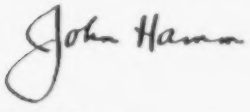
Nova Scotia has adopted the following immigration policy statement:

*Nova Scotia welcomes and embraces immigrants, recognizing the important contributions they make to our social, economic, and cultural fabric. The Government of Nova Scotia will take a lead role in engaging and working with partners to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants.*

The province has moved to establish an Immigration Office, consolidating all provincial immigration activities into one location. Key to our vision is a commitment to continue to engage our partners, and in many cases, government will be joining with organizations that have already shown their dedication to ensuring immigrant successes.

This strategy has been developed by government with the involvement of many sectors, including business, labour, professional organizations, ethnic and religious groups, immigrant settlement agencies, members of the public, and of course, immigrants themselves. The consultations have shown us how important and valuable immigration has been to our province in the past, and will be in the future. Our province has been built on the contributions of immigrants both past and present. We take pride in the contributions all Nova Scotians have made.

I look forward to the work ahead and to letting the world know what we already know—how wonderful it is to live in Nova Scotia.



John F. Hamm
Premier of Nova Scotia

# Table of Contents


Introduction . . . . . 1

- Why We Need Immigration . . . . . 1
- How We Got Here . . . . . 3
- What We Heard . . . . . 3
- Putting It All Together . . . . . 5

An Immigration Strategy for Nova Scotia . . . . . 6

- Our Policy . . . . . 6
- Our Guiding Principles . . . . . 6
- Our Targets . . . . . 7

Implementing the Strategy . . . . . 8

- Welcoming Community . . . . . 8
- Attraction . . . . . 10
- Integration and Retention . . . . . 15
- Working with Our Partners . . . . . 19
- Nova Scotia Immigration Office . . . . . 25
- Accountability: Measuring and Reporting on Progress . . . . . 26
- Next Steps . . . . . 26

Conclusion . . . . . 27

# Introduction

## Why We Need Immigration

Immigrants enrich the social, cultural, and economic life of Nova Scotia. And now, more than ever, immigration is essential for building Nova Scotia's future.

We are facing a number of demographic and economic challenges—slow population growth, an aging population, low birthrate, out-migration of our young people, urbanization, low immigration numbers—all of which may lead to labour shortages, slowing demand for goods and services, and increasing fiscal pressures in the years to come.

These trends challenge us to finds ways to continue to support the way of life that we enjoy. Immigration is one way by which Nova Scotia can help meet our long-term population, economic, and labour force needs.

### Challenging the Myths

The benefits of increasing immigration to the province can be realized if Nova Scotians are welcoming and inclusive and ready to embrace new arrivals to their communities. Becoming an inclusive society includes shedding light on some of the myths associated with immigration and highlighting the benefits immigrants bring. For example, data from the 2001 Census shows that, when compared to the general provincial population, immigrants to Nova Scotia have

- lower rates of unemployment
- higher employment income
- higher average income (includes all sources)
- lower percentage of their income from government transfers
- higher education levels
- higher levels of entrepreneurship (and thus are creating jobs for Nova Scotians)

Further research conducted across Canada indicates that

- Immigration creates no permanent unemployment (it does not take jobs away from non-immigrants).[1]
- Immigrants use health services less than the Canadian-born population, and in particular, newcomers to Canada have better overall health status and less chronic illness such as cancer and heart disease.[2]
- Many immigrant and refugee children are doing better emotionally and academically than their Canadian-born peers.[3]
- Immigrant households in 1990 paid more in taxes then they received in public services (child tax credit, education costs for children, employment insurance benefits, health care costs) and, on average, made a net transfer of public funds to the average Canadian.[4]

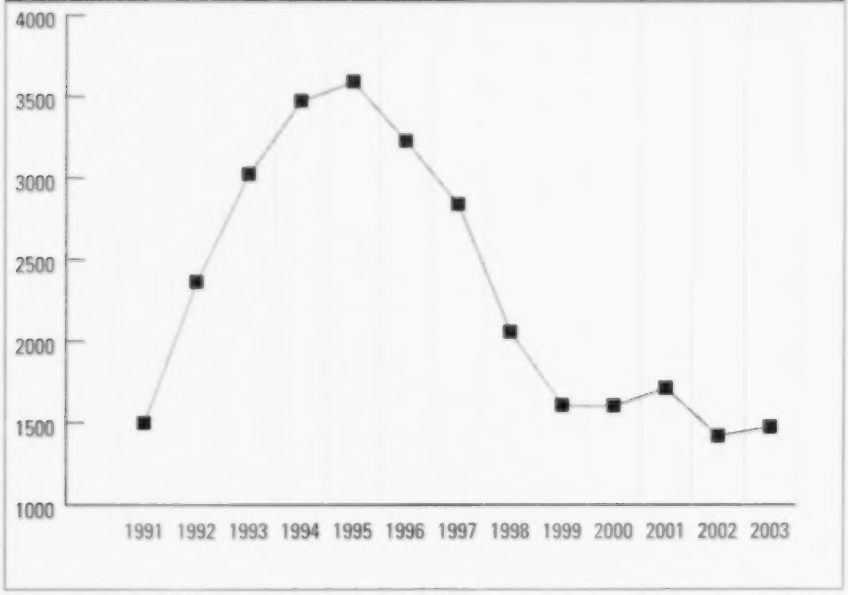
1 Economic Council of Canada
2 Health Canada
3 Statistics Canada
4 Backgrounder, Nova Scotia Immigration Partnership Conference

According to the 2001 census data, immigrants who come to Nova Scotia do very well and contribute to the economy. Immigrants bring links to other countries that can be used to export goods and services. They bring technical skills, linguistic diversity, international experiences, innovative ideas, as well as capital investment and entrepreneurship skills.

Immigration is also important for strengthening the diversity of our communities. We have only to look around—at our theatres, our art galleries, our restaurants, our council chambers, our places of worship—to understand and appreciate the contributions both recent and past immigrants have made to our province.

Immigration is needed to ensure our continued economic, social, and cultural prosperity. However, our immigration intake has been on the decline for nearly a decade. Between 1995 and 2003 the numbers of arrivals to our province dropped nearly 60 per cent. As a result, federal funding for our settlement agencies has decreased, affecting their ability to provide adequate services.

**Nova Scotia / Immigration Trends**



To reverse these trends, we need to understand why immigrants move to particular communities and to act on this knowledge. Research shows that immigrants prefer to settle in urban centres and gives three reasons for this national trend:

1 increased closeness to family or similar ethnic groups
2 enhanced employment opportunities
3 improved access to support services that help with integration into Canadian society

With these understandings, we—governments and partners—will target specific initiatives to meet the needs of immigrants. We will promote Nova Scotia as an immigration destination of choice by marketing all of the reasons why this province is a great place in which to live—quality of life, low cost of living, safe communities, accessible services, and a growing economy. Clearly, government must be more coordinated and strategic in its approach to attracting, integrating, and retaining immigrants to this province. For these reasons, the Government of Nova Scotia has developed this immigration strategy. The strategy charts the key directions required to ensure that we value and welcome immigrants and their economic, social, and cultural contribution, now and in the future.

## How We Got Here

A discussion paper, entitled *A Framework for Immigration*, was released in August 2004 by the Premier of Nova Scotia. The paper outlined demographic trends and their implications, a policy statement, attraction and retention targets, and ideas to explore (proposed actions and initiatives to meet the targets).

Forty-five consultation meetings were held across the province between August and November 2004. Business and community leaders and representatives from the public, private, and volunteer sectors all contributed their views at these roundtables. In addition to the consultations, we received 41 written submissions and 259 e-mails, 85 of which contained comments on the framework document.

The feedback received during the consultation meetings and through the written submissions was compiled in the *Immigration Strategy Consultation Document: What We Heard*. This input was considered by officials in the development of the provincial immigration strategy. Meeting notes and the *Report of the Consultations* can be found on the Internet at <www.gov.ns.ca/govt/immigration>.

## What We Heard

Most agree that immigration is an important lever to address our future demographic and economic challenges. Suggested targets are reasonable but should be flexible.

Recommendations were made that the provincial government

- organize immigration effectively
- provide dedicated resources for immigration
- coordinate immigration in one entity with a unique identity
- strengthen and streamline the Nova Scotia Nominee Program by clarifying the process and fee structure and adding new streams
- engage the federal government in addressing problems related to the immigration application process, inadequate client service, frustrations experienced in dealing with the CIC Call Centre, and concerns about the treatment of immigration applicants by at overseas visa posts
- ensure that attraction is geared to real opportunity
- provide adequate support for settlement organizations
- consult with the francophone community on attraction and integration of French-speaking immigrants
- be sensitive to the differences between women and men throughout the immigration experience
- involve communities
- focus on our strengths, such as our education system and making connections with existing immigrant communities who can act as "unofficial ambassadors"
- raise the profile of immigration and diversity in all communities and regions
- make accurate information available to potential immigrants before they arrive in Nova Scotia

Most importantly, there is a willingness among partners to work with government to make this happen; in fact, the formation of an immigration council was proposed. There is also agreement that immigration is just one tool to address our demographic, economic, and labour force needs, and this cannot be done in the absence of other social, economic development, and labour force strategies.

## Putting It All Together

The Nova Scotia Government's overall vision for the province is of a healthy, prosperous, self-sufficient Nova Scotia. Immigration is one path by which this will be achieved.

The overall economic and skills agenda for the province is outlined in three documents: *Opportunities for Prosperity, Skills Nova Scotia Framework,* and the *Innovation Policy.* Immigration is a component of each of these. A number of other strategies relating to these documents are also in development. They include a community development policy, a youth employment and skills development strategy, an aboriginal labour market strategy, and a multiculturalism strategy.

Government recognizes that a social policy framework, an African–Nova Scotian strategy, a strategy for persons with disabilities, a positive aging strategy, and a comprehensive repatriation strategy are also needed to address the challenges ahead. All of these initiatives are critical components for ensuring economic prosperity for all Nova Scotians.

# An Immigration Strategy for Nova Scotia

## Our Policy

Nova Scotia is committed to enhancing immigration and has adopted the following policy statement:

*Nova Scotia welcomes and embraces immigrants, recognizing the important contributions they make to our social, economic, and cultural fabric. The Government of Nova Scotia will take a lead role in engaging and working with partners to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants.*

## Guiding Principles

Implied in the direction we received from stakeholders were fundamental values shared by Nova Scotians. We have taken these values to develop guiding principles. As initiatives are developed and considered, they will be filtered through these principles to ensure that policies and programs are consistent with the underlying values of this strategy.

We have identified four principles: *Responsible; Community-based, Nova Scotia Approach; Fair and Inclusive;* and *Accountable.* These principles will guide us to make Nova Scotia an attractive immigration destination and a welcoming community for newcomers.

### Responsible

A balanced, responsible approach—one that focuses on individuals most likely to succeed, while not forgetting Canada's humanitarian tradition of helping those in need—is the best way to ensure that immigration contributes to Nova Scotia's economic and social growth. It would be irresponsible to encourage people to immigrate here if they were not given opportunities to succeed. Equally, newcomers have a responsibility to learn about the culture and customs of Nova Scotia. We also respect the needs of underdeveloped countries that have sent students to Nova Scotia for a post-secondary education with the understanding that they would bring their skills back home.

### Community-Based, Nova Scotia Approach

Each community has different needs and methods for addressing its needs. Government will work with an approved community development policy to encourage communities to take the lead in developing their own immigration objectives.

### Fair and Inclusive

Inclusiveness means more than being friendly or hospitable. It means welcoming immigrants into our communities, providing employment opportunities, and extending a hand of friendship. We must ensure that *all* people living in Nova Scotia have the opportunity to achieve social and economic success. For example, because of perceived gender roles, women have additional needs that will be considered when polices and programs are developed. The province is committed to incorporating the principles of gender-based analysis in immigration programming and policies.

### Accountable

We are committed to the effective and efficient use of resources to achieve the targets and objectives of this strategy. We also commit to developing performance measures and reporting on progress. To that end, the Immigration Office will prepare an annual business plan and release an annual accountability report.

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### Our Targets

Our immigration targets are

- 70 per cent retention rate for the 2006–2011 census period
- 3,600 annual immigrant arrivals within four years of full strategy implementation

These targets were supported during the consultations as a credible goal, with a desire to see the targets increase once we start seeing success.

First and foremost, our goal is to improve the retention of immigrants. To accomplish this, we must all ensure that immigrants are successful so that they will choose to stay in Nova Scotia, help grow the economy, and enjoy our quality of life.

We plan to attract 3,600 newcomers to Nova Scotia each year, and we will strike a balance among economic immigration, reuniting families, and upholding Canada's humanitarian tradition by providing support and safety for persons in need of protection.

This strategy calls for tools and actions aimed at making Nova Scotia more attractive as an immigration destination. The benefits accrued from this immigration strategy will be realized over time. This immigration strategy is a five-year plan that recognizes that additional benefits will come from the successes of immigrant children.

# Implementing the Strategy

The implementation of the strategy will focus on the following four key strategic directions:

- supporting a **welcoming community** by educating Nova Scotians about the contributions that immigrants can make to our future social, cultural, and economic prosperity
- **attracting** immigrants by actively marketing and promoting Nova Scotia as an immigration destination
- **integrating** immigrants into daily life by providing the settlement services necessary to help them live, work, and learn in Nova Scotia
- **retaining** immigrants by creating conditions that allow them to make Nova Scotia their permanent home

## Welcoming Community

Immigration is an issue of the heart: people will come and stay only if they can provide for their families and if they can make personal contact and build supportive networks in their workplaces and communities. Welcoming immigrants has a specific, local dimension, requiring the support not only of the public, but also of the various groups and organizations that operate within a particular community.

Government will provide leadership in encouraging collective acceptance of immigration among Nova Scotians and ensuring that a welcoming community awaits new arrivals. Our focus is on increasing awareness about the benefits of immigration and supporting multiculturalism to further develop Nova Scotia as an open and welcoming destination for immigrants.

**Objective** *To encourage Nova Scotians to celebrate cultural diversity and accept immigrants into our society and economy*

### Embracing Diversity and Immigration

- Promote diversity and cultural competency training in our workplaces, communities, and schools, working towards the removal of systemic barriers
- Work with employers and unions to promote diversity and inclusive, welcoming workplaces and environments
- Work with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage on the development and implementation of Nova Scotia's multiculturalism strategy
- Assist ethno-cultural associations with their efforts to welcome and support immigrants of similar backgrounds
- Address the inequities and perceived racism experienced by minority groups by working in conjunction with other government agencies that have built expertise in diversity and multicultural awareness

### Awareness and Education

- Illustrate to Nova Scotians the benefits of immigration and diversity by demonstrating the economic, cultural, and social benefits that immigrants contribute to the province
- Work with the Nova Scotia Department of Education, school boards, the teachers union, teachers, and community organizations to raise awareness about the immigrant experience
- Encourage elected officials from all levels of government, as well as other leadership figures, to speak about the importance of immigrants to Nova Scotia and to attend citizenship ceremonies and multicultural events

## Attraction

Immigrants who come to Canada tend to choose cities, and most settle in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal. In order to put Nova Scotia on the map, we will have to work harder to demonstrate to immigrants the benefits of living in our province.

Nova Scotia has much to offer. Excellent P–12 and post-secondary education institutions, our coastal location, a variety of natural environments and regions, safe communities, rich culture, low cost of living, competitive business climate, proximity to major trade routes, growing economy, and accessible settlement services—all add up to an excellent quality of life. Government will work with partners to make Nova Scotia an attractive destination for newcomers to Canada.

**Objective** *To attract 3,600 immigrants within four years of full strategy implementation*

### Marketing and Promotion of Nova Scotia as an Immigration Destination

- Develop a marketing plan and promotion materials that describe what it is like to live in Nova Scotia, displaying our cultural and ethnic diversity
- Target promotional efforts at Canadian visa posts to engage them more positively in our recruitment efforts
- Ensure that key information is available in both of Canada's official languages
- Conduct research with immigrants who have come to Nova Scotia and have succeeded to find out why they chose Nova Scotia and frame promotional material around their experiences
- Encourage immigrants living here to act as unofficial ambassadors in their countries of origin, raising awareness of the province and providing advice to potential immigrants

### Immigration Marketing Missions

- Participate in immigration attraction missions overseas to show potential immigrants why Nova Scotia is a good place in which to live and work and how to best to take advantage of existing immigration streams
- Seek input from communities and engage them in the development of promotional materials and messages for these missions
- Partner with other Atlantic provinces to promote the region as an attractive immigration destination
- Coordinate immigration marketing with business, tourism, and other marketing strategies, e.g., Brand Nova Scotia

### Website

- Develop a comprehensive website to provide a single-window access point for information that promotes the province and to provide information on settlement services in Nova Scotia
- Provide information about adapting to life in Nova Scotia (e.g., finding a doctor, getting a driver's licence, banking, etc.)
- Work with the federal government to ensure that key information is provided in both of Canada's official languages
- Work with communities and regional development authorities to ensure that information about all regions of Nova Scotia is available, including links to websites identified by these groups

### Labour Market Information

- Work with the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to obtain and utilize information on labour market and occupational supply and demand pressures
- Engage employers and labour unions in the identification of future labour market needs
- Provide labour market information to potential immigrants so they can determine if their skills and experience are in demand and how they can access employment in their occupation

**Targeted Immigration**

- Target immigrants from countries that have existing communities in Nova Scotia to ensure that newcomers will be supported and assisted with their integration
- Work to promote private and group refugee sponsorships in communities interested in aiding those in need of protection
- Monitor world events and promote the province as a destination for individuals seeking to move from their home countries
- Pursue additional memorandums of understanding with the federal government to make Nova Scotia a more attractive post-secondary education destination for international students
- Collaborate with the federal government to make the application for work permits more flexible, allowing graduates to work immediately after finding employment

## Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP)

In 2002, Nova Scotia signed a provincial nominee agreement to allow the province to nominate up to 1,000 immigration candidates plus their families over five years to meet the economic and social needs of the province. Nominees accepted under the program, and approved by the federal government after health and criminality reviews, become permanent residents of Canada.

Currently, there are three general streams of applicants for the NSNP

- economic
- skilled worker
- community identified

The NSNP has been fully operational since July 2003. During the consultations, a number of suggestions were made to improve the nominee program and new streams have been suggested. Suggestions to strengthen and streamline the process will be implemented, and the effectiveness of the program will be evaluated by March 31, 2007.

## Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) Categories

There are three general streams of applicants for the NSNP.

The **Economic** category supports the growth and development of small businesses in the province. Small businesses receive funds to support their growth plans, and nominees receive orientation to working life in Nova Scotia. In addition to language, age, and education requirements, candidates must have business management experience and be prepared to make a non-refundable contribution, most of which goes into an escrow account for use by an approved small business employer. As part of the program, applicants receive a paid six-month employment contract with a Nova Scotia business. This category is unique to nominee programs in Canada. The Economic stream is in demand as a result of of community presentations and meetings with regional development authorities (RDAs), business, and community economic development organizations.

The **Skilled** category is designed to meet critical labour market skills shortages and is employer-driven. In addition to language, age, and education requirements, candidates must have a guaranteed offer of a permanent full-time job from a Nova Scotian employer in an area where an employer has identified a skill shortage. At present, the NSNP is working with the academic and medical community to bring skilled workers quickly to Nova Scotia. Many of the skilled worker nominees are already working and living in Nova Scotia as temporary workers.

The **Community-identified** stream is offered through RDAs and community partners. Every RDA can recommend nominees who will add social or economic value to their community. The RDA and community partners develop their own criteria based on their business plan outcomes and what they want to achieve as a development group.

**Objective** *To optimize and improve the Nova Scotia Nominee Program*

### Strengthening the Program

- Educate employers, communities, and regional development authorities on ways to benefit from the NSNP
- Improve marketing and promotional aspects of the NSNP, such as the website and promotional brochures
- Ensure that the program remains responsive to changing labour market conditions
- Work with regional development authorities and community partners to support and further enhance the community-identified stream

- Work with our federal colleagues to ensure that visitor visas will be issued to people who are considering immigrating to Nova Scotia (i.e., dual intent allowances in the federal legislation)
- Review the necessity for potential nominees to visit Nova Scotia for a personal interview
- Ensure that the fee structure for the program is competitive with nominee programs in other provinces

**Introduce New Streams**

International Post-Secondary Students

- Target international students for immigration because they know the community, understand the job market, have graduated with Nova Scotia credentials, and have acquired good language skills and a strong sense of Nova Scotia culture

Family Business Stream

- Develop a stream to allow immigrants who have made Nova Scotia their home and who are business owners to nominate a family member to come and work for them in their business; the businesses must show that they can support the family member at prevailing wage rates and working conditions

Entrepreneur Stream

- Assess the viability of adding an Entrepreneur stream
- Engage Citizenship and Immigration Canada and other federal and provincial partners during discussions

## Integration and Retention

The most critical phase in the immigration process is integration. Looking for accommodation, finding a school, making new friends, finding a job, and learning a new language are all daunting tasks that need to be addressed upon arrival in a new country. Immigrants need a helping hand to guide them through the process of establishing themselves in their communities.

Successful integration depends largely on the quality of settlement services an immigrant receives once he or she arrives.

Gender needs must also be taken into consideration. Throughout the immigration process, women and men often play different roles regarding who makes the decision to leave, prepares for the move in which ways, finds employment first, gets accredited first, learns a new language first, and takes care of the family. Social expectations and gender roles dictate that it is more often the woman who stays at home with the family while the man accesses language training and secures employment.

Language training is a priority for newcomers and a key to successful integration and, ultimately, retention. To live, work, and raise families in Nova Scotia, newcomers must be proficient in English and/or French. Therefore, they need to access a full range of language training opportunities to help them develop the necessary proficiency. In particular, immigrants often face language challenges in their search for appropriate employment, in the pursuit of post-secondary studies, and in accessing their own professions.

The language needs of newcomers beyond basic language training are not being adequately addressed. The gaps in service, especially with regard to occupation-specific, sector-specific, and employment-specific language training, are limiting employment prospects and opportunities.

Another retention issue is that of credential assessment and recognition. Immigrants may not be able to stay in Nova Scotia if they cannot find employment opportunities in their chosen fields. Immigrants face barriers in having their qualifications and international work experience recognized and, in some cases, their professional licensing validated. To retain skilled workers and trained professionals and to fill labour market needs, we will encourage immigrants to access recognized credential assessment services.

More importantly, we will work with professional bodies, industry associations, employers, and educational institutions to ensure acceptance of these credentials once they are assessed. Immigrants also lack Canadian work experience, and as a consequence, many work below their qualifications to obtain Canadian employment references. Employers can assist immigrants to obtain relevant Canadian work experience either by employing them as fully qualified staff members or by providing apprenticeship positions.

Retention is key. Immigrants will want to stay if they feel they are full participants in Nova Scotia's economic, civic, cultural, and community life. We can all help with this.

**Objective** *To increase our retention rate to 70 per cent for the 2006–2011 census period.*

**Support for Service-Providing Organizations**

- Work with the federal government and organizations that provide settlement services to strategically allocate appropriate funding available in federal and provincial sources
- Identify and address gaps in settlement services
- Provide agencies that offer integration supports to newcomers with enhanced funding to foster innovative programs leading to higher retention rates
- Improve access to settlement services in regions outside metro Halifax that have no critical mass of immigrants (e.g., through outreach programs or online)
- Ensure that support mechanisms recognize the different cultural and gender-based issues faced by immigrant women and men, as well as the needs of immigrant youth

**Language Training for Adults**

- Pursue strategic funding of language programs for newcomers, ensuring smooth and successful integration into society and the workforce
- Expand the availability of childcare services at language schools so immigrant women and men can access these programs

- Improve access to services for regions outside metro Halifax that have fewer immigrants (e.g., through outreach programs or online)
- Address the needs of women and men who are unable to attend traditional language training schools because they are homebound
- Continue to work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to fund advanced and occupation-specific language programs under the Enhanced Language Training Initiative (ELTI) to enable immigrants to find and retain jobs commensurate with their skill levels
- Ensure that language training is available for immigrants who choose to live in francophone communities

**Language Training for Public School Students**

- Work with the Nova Scotia Department of Education and the regional school boards to ensure that the language needs of immigrant children are addressed

**Labour Market Attachment**

- Improve access to labour market attachment services so immigrants can find meaningful employment or business opportunities
- Work closely with employers to ensure that they are aware of the advantages of hiring international skilled labour

**International Credential (Qualification) Assessment and Recognition**

- Build on the work started by organizations that provide settlement services to establish a credential assessment service with Maritime partners
- Market and promote the credential assessment service
- Develop bridging programs that would fill gaps in sectors experiencing labour market shortages
- Engage professional associations, education and training institutions, industry, labour organizations, and employers to ensure recognition of credentials that have met the credential assessment tests

- Work with the medical professional associations and the Nova Scotia Department of Health to establish an assessment service for internationally educated health professionals (IEHP)
- Engage employers, regulatory bodies, and professional agencies to create pathways and materials to show immigrants how to enter the labour force in their chosen professions

**Access to Provincial Government Services**

- Ensure that services provided to the public are accessible to immigrants
- Build cross-cultural competency throughout the public service in order to provide the services needed by members of our diverse populations

**Nova Scotia as an Immigrant Employer**

- Ensure that the Government of Nova Scotia leads the way in recognizing international credentials
- Work with the Public Service Commission to conduct a review of hiring practices to ensure that these processes do not create systemic barriers for designated groups, young people, or immigrants

## Working with Our Partners

Government cannot do this alone. With the commitment, support, and involvement of all three levels of government, business, organized labour, regulatory bodies, communities, settlement agencies, ethnic communities, and immigrant groups, we will be able to effectively implement fair and responsible programs to attract and retain newcomers.

During the consultations, stakeholders were almost unanimous in their support for increasing retention and attracting immigrants. Clearly there is a willingness to work together to make it happen, and many are taking the lead on issues to help immigrants successfully integrate. Many organizations and individuals offered suggestions on how they could participate.

### Settlement-providing Organizations

Settlement-providing organizations (SPOs) are community based and primarily funded by the federal government, through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). They provide a variety of crucial settlement and integration services such as language training and assessments, employment services, entrepreneur programs, programs for youth, and advocacy services and have a role to play in raising cultural awareness and educating the public about diversity and social inclusion.

### Federal Government

Immigration is a responsibility of both federal and provincial levels of government. The law under which all immigration to Canada occurs is the federal Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). Provinces have the ability to negotiate federal-provincial agreements, giving provinces the flexibility to meet their own immigration objectives. The success of the province's immigration strategy is largely dependent on the level of co-operation between the two levels of government. In addition to CIC, other federal departments and agencies that have an interest in immigration include the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC), Human Resources Skills Development (HRSD), and Canadian Heritage. Working together with our federal partners will ensure maximum benefits from our collective immigration efforts.

### Municipal Governments

Municipal governments are the closest to people in communities. They play an important role in engaging citizens about the benefits immigration can bring to Nova Scotia. Municipal governments also play an important role in developing specific strategies at the community level.

### Business and Industry

Immigration brings economic benefits to Nova Scotia, but that can happen only if immigrants find work or can pursue business opportunities. Immigrants who come here through the economic and skilled worker streams of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program and through similar federal streams will provide economic benefits as well as new ideas, innovative approaches, and international contacts.

Employers can assist by offering full-time jobs and/or apprenticeship positions to the most qualified applicants and not discounting immigrants.

### Regulatory Bodies and Professional Associations

Many immigrants will continue to face significant barriers in trying to find employment upon arrival. While many are well educated and highly qualified professionals, their hard-earned credentials are often not recognized by regulatory bodies or professional associations. Some regulatory bodies and professional associations are working hard to address this issue. For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, along with the Department of Health, are presently working on an assessment service for internationally educated health professionals (IEHP).

### Organized Labour

During consultations, labour leaders confirmed that skills shortages in some sectors are on the horizon. They stressed, however, that immigration is just one answer to our demographic, labour, economic, and social concerns. Also needed are a social policy framework and comprehensive workforce participation strategies for aboriginals, African–Nova Scotians, persons with disabilities, and youth, as well as a repatriation strategy to encourage our young people to return home. They recommended that these strategies, as well as an immigration strategy, be linked to a broader economic strategy.

Labour representatives advised that good jobs are key to successful integration and retention of immigrants. Good jobs are permanent, full time, and well paying and come with benefits (not casual or part-time work). Part-time workers, with no other support, have difficulty making ends meet when trying to raise a family.

### Regional Development Authorities and Community Development Organizations

Regional development authorities (RDAs) provide leadership and coordination for regional and community growth. RDAs recognize the importance of a skilled workforce to regional development and have been important partners in the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) through their ability to nominate individual immigrants to match a local need.

As noted in our guiding principles, our approach will be community based. Some municipalities and community organizations have already begun developing their own immigration strategies, including Halifax Regional Municipality and the Greater Halifax Partnership; the Colchester Regional Development Authority; the Cape Breton Regional Municipality; and the Coalition for Immigration, facilitated by NovaKnowledge.

### Religious, Ethnic, and Voluntary Community Groups

Ethnic community groups are also essential to the attraction and integration of new immigrants. Immigrants often seek out communities of like-minded individuals who can identify with their culture and language. This is especially important for immigrant women who have more difficulty making connections within society if they are not in the workforce.

Religious organizations of all denominations have also been in the forefront of immigration issues through the sponsorship of refugees. Many organizations have negotiated umbrella agreements with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) that allow individual churches, mosques, and synagogues to sponsor refugees and their families, addressing the humanitarian aspect of immigration.

### Immigrant Women

Immigrant women who participated in the consultations called for the introduction of gender-based analysis (GBA) in the development of programs. GBA is a process of assessing the impact of existing or proposed policies and programs on women and men, appreciating gender differences, and recognizing different social realities, life expectations, and economic circumstances.

### Acadian and Francophone Communities

The Canada/Nova Scotia nominee agreement is the first such agreement to include clauses related to consulting with the French language community on their immigration needs. The Acadian and francophone communities have agreed to work with the province to help recruit, welcome, and integrate immigrants to francophone and Acadian communities in this province.

### Atlantic Provincial Governments

Immigration is important to the future of the Atlantic region. The Council of Atlantic Premiers has agreed to pursue opportunities for regional co-operation (e.g., Atlantic immigration marketing). The Premiers have also agreed to a renewed co-operative approach with the federal government in the area of economic development, including immigration.

### Education and Research Institutions

Immigration-related research is needed to keep current on immigration trends and opportunities. Universities, think-tanks, and research organizations like the Atlantic Metropolis Centre are important for informing immigration policy development.

**Objective** *To engage partners in the implementation of the immigration strategy*

#### Engaging Partners

- Solidify the commitments made by each of the partners
- Explore the proposed creation of a council on immigration to represent partners and advise government

**Settlement-Providing Organizations**

- Collaborate with SPOs to deliver services in the most cost-effective manner and devise a strategy to ensure stable funding

**Federal Government**

- Strengthen partnerships with federal departments and explore joint mechanisms to strategically allocate funds for settlement services
- Negotiate a framework agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), which will be tailored to meet the province's immigration goals and objectives
- Bring forward issues identified by immigrants concerning processing delays, inadequate client services, and treatment experienced at visa posts
- Determine immigration levels, coordinate funding arrangements, and identify strategic opportunities for regional dispersion with Citizenship and Immigration Canada

**Municipal Government**

- Assist municipalities interested in attracting immigrants by engaging them in marketing and promotion efforts and developing service delivery capacity

**Business and Industry**

- Work with employers, sector councils, regulatory bodies, and professional associations to better identify potential skills shortages, smooth access to work for immigrants, and assist with recognizing immigrant work experience

**Regulatory Bodies and Professional Associations**

- Encourage regulatory bodies and professional associations to recognize international credentials assessed as meeting Canadian standards, encourage members to mentor immigrants in their occupational fields, and provide networking opportunities

**Organized Labour**

- Engage organized labour and labour leaders in the promotion of supportive workplace environments
- Access research conducted by organized labour to assist with forecasting skills shortages and labour needs

**Regional and Community Development Organizations**

- Work in partnership with regional development authorities, community development organizations, and municipalities to assist, as appropriate, with the development of their own immigration strategies
- Collaborate on the development of marketing materials to be used on overseas trade missions and on the promotion of their communities and regions to immigrants

**Religious, Ethnic, and Voluntary Community Groups**

- Build strategies in partnership with religious, ethnic, and voluntary communities to welcome newcomers, improve integration, and increase retention
- Enhance existing friendship programs (e.g., the federal Host program) to match recent immigrants with Nova Scotians who help immigrants meet the challenges of a new culture and language
- Increase private and group sponsorships of refugees by working with community groups interested in sponsoring persons in need of protection

**Immigrant Women**

- Consult with immigrant women to incorporate the principles of gender-based analysis in immigration policy and program development

**Acadian and Francophone Communities**

- Partner with the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse to ensure that the French-language community is promoted in recruitment efforts and is assisted in the integration of immigrants in their communities
- Consult the francophone community throughout implementation of the strategy

**Atlantic Provincial Governments**

- Collaborate with the Atlantic provinces in areas such as joint overseas marketing initiatives, credential assessment, and information sharing

**Education and Research Institutions**

- Collaborate with education and research institutions such as the Atlantic Metropolis Atlantique Centre for Excellence, the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, and the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council to undertake required research that is responsive and suits the needs of government and partners
- With the assistance of research institutions, develop research capacity to learn more about why immigrants stay or move on
- Identify pathways to assist immigrants with labour market attachment and to determine which countries are most suitable for recruitment purposes

## Nova Scotia Immigration Office

In the past, immigration activities have occurred in a number of government departments, making it difficult to give it a strong profile and focus. A minister and deputy minister have been assigned responsibility for immigration, and it will have the full attention of an executive director. This will give immigration matters a stronger voice at the Cabinet table and with the federal government. It also provides direct accountability to the public through the House of Assembly. This structure ensures that immigration is fully connected to all senior policy forums and with all decision-making levels within government.

An Immigration Office will be established to provide leadership on immigration and settlement matters and to develop specific actions to execute the strategy. It will coordinate with other government departments providing services to immigrants, and it will also formalize partnerships with settlement organizations, business and professional organizations, ethnic, religious, and voluntary groups, community organizations, and labour unions.

## Accountability: Measuring and Reporting on Progress

Specific targets, and time frames to meet these targets, have been clearly identified. The Immigration Office will be accountable for reporting annually.

An accountability framework will be developed by the Immigration Office to ensure that programs are working to support the targets and objectives. An annual report on the progress made to date will be published, and a formal evaluation of the office will be conducted in the fifth year of operation.

## Next Steps

Work will now begin on the establishment and staffing of the new Immigration Office. In the short term, the province is working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to negotiate a memorandum of understanding to allow international students to work off-campus during their course of study. This MOU will help to make the province a more attractive destination for international post-secondary students.

Through the nominee program Nova Scotia will be promoted as an immigration destination, and immigrants who meet the criteria of the existing selection streams and who show a commitment to living in this province will be nominated.

A priority of the Immigration Office will be to formalize strong connections with colleagues in provincial departments and with other partners.

# Conclusion

The release of this strategy marks a new era for immigration in Nova Scotia. This document is the foundation for action that will attract 3,600 arrivals annually, with a focus on retaining 70 per cent of the immigrants who arrive. We will ensure that government's efforts are fair and inclusive; that we are responsible; and that action is driven at the community level.

This strategy sets the stage for Nova Scotia to welcome and embrace immigrants, recognizing the important contributions they make to our social, economic, and cultural fabric. The Government of Nova Scotia will engage partners to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants.

Together, we have built the foundation for a long-lasting partnership that is essential to achieving success.

# Appendix

## Immigration Categories in Canada

A permanent resident is a person who has been accepted as an immigrant to Canada and who has arrived in Canada. The phrase "landed immigrant" has a similar meaning. A permanent resident can lose that status if he or she does not comply with certain conditions.

Permanent residents have most of the rights enjoyed by Canadian citizens under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, they do not have the right to run for Parliament, vote in a federal election, or hold a Canadian passport. A permanent resident may apply for Canadian citizenship if he or she has lived in Canada for three years or more, is able to communicate in French or English, knows about Canada, and knows about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

## Classes of Immigration

### Family Class

Canadian citizens or permanent residents may sponsor the following members of the family class living abroad:

- spouses, common-law or conjugal partners, 16 years of age or older
- parents and grandparents
- dependent children, including adopted children
- children under 18 years of age whom you intend to adopt
- children under guardianship (where the province of destination will recognize the guardianship under provincial law)
- brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, or grandchildren who are orphans under age 18 and not married or in a common-law relationship
- any other relative, if the sponsor has no relative as described above, either abroad or in Canada

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| **Refugee Class** | | Convention refugees are those who<br>• have a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinions, or membership in a particular social group<br>• are outside the country of their nationality and are unable or, by reason of that fear, are unwilling to be protected by that country<br>• not having a country of nationality, are outside the country of their former habitual residence and are unable or, by reason of that fear, are unwilling to return to that country |
| **Economic Class** | **Skilled worker** | Requires a pass mark of 67 points under federal criteria |
| | **Business immigrant** | • Investor (invests at least at least $400,000, has net worth of $800,000+)<br>• Entrepreneur (managerial experience, $300,000 net worth, sufficient points)<br>• Self-employed person (applying experience in an athletic or cultural field or as a farm manager) |
| | **Provincial Nominee** | Nova Scotia categories<br>• Skilled Worker<br>• Economic<br>• Community Identified |

More information about immigration to Canada can be found on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/>.